

REMARKS

This amendment is being made pursuant to the Office Action mailed April 17, 2006. Claims 1-3, and 5-26 are pending in the application. Claim 4 has been cancelled without prejudice.

COMMENTS REGARDING CLAIMS 22 AND 23

Per the Examiner's comments, claim 22 has been amended by removing the limitation "cleaning" in line 1, such that the claim simply refers to the "tool" of claim 21. The dependency of claim 23 has also been changed, per the Examiner's suggestion, to depend from claim 21.

SPECIFICATION

Applicant has amended paragraph [0031] to correct a minor typographical error.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112, SECOND PARAGRAPH

Claims 1-9 were rejected because of informalities in claim 1, claim 5 and claim 6. In view of the amendments to claim 1, into which the limitations of claim 4 have been incorporated, it is believed that these rejections have been rendered moot. The Examiner will also note that in the penultimate line of claim 1, the term "said" has been changed to an to remove any potential lack of antecedent basis. Reconsideration is therefore respectfully requested.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102(B)

Claims 1, 8 and 21 were found as being anticipated by Crabtree (U.S. Pat. No. 6,360,402; hereinafter "Crabtree"). For the following reasons, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Initially, it will be noted that claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of dependent claim 4. Dependent claim 4 has been indicated by the Examiner as being allowable if rewritten in independent form. Accordingly, it is believed that this rejection has been rendered moot. Claims 2, 3 and 5-9, which each depend directly from claim 1, are also believed to be in allowable form. Reconsideration and allowance of these claims is thus respectfully requested.

Regarding Claim 1, it will be noted that a minor amendment has been made to Claim 21 to particularly point out that the handle assembly includes a slidably movable locking member. This structure is not shown or suggested in Crabtree (US 6,360,402). Crabtree involves a handle attachment 200 that makes use of two C-shaped components 22,24 that are hingedly connected together, and which are held in a closed position around a pull bar 56 of a travel case 58 using a pair of strips of hook/loop type fastening materials 18,21. This is fundamentally different from the handle assembly of the present application, which can be much more quickly and easily connected and disconnected from an external handle via the slidable locking member. Moreover, there is nothing in Crabtree to suggest using such a slidable locking member. For at least these reasons, reconsideration and withdrawal of the §102(b) rejection of claim 21, based on Crabtree, is most respectfully requested.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 3 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Crabtree. The rejection relative to claim 3 has been rendered moot by the amendment made to claim 1.

Claims 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24 and 25 were rejected as being obvious over Castellon (U.S. Pat. No. 6,434,774) in view of Brown (U.S. Pat. No. 1,083,054). In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Independent claim 10 has been amended to more positively recite that the locking element has a channel that is carried by one of the first and second portions. The channel is movable slidably between a locked position to engage with edges of the first and second portions to thus hold said edges in abutting engagement around the graspable portion of the tool, and to clamp the main body portion of the tool to the graspable portion. The locking element is also slidably movable to an unlocked position so that the edges of the first and second portions of the main body portion are able to be separated. Castellon does not show or suggest the structure, either independently or when taken in connection with Brown. There is no description whatsoever as to how the handle 27 (Figure 1 of Castellon) is held to the shaft assembly 30. However, this does not appear to be a removable assembly. Brown is constructed in a fundamentally different way to include a conventional threaded screw and wing nut (note Figure 2) that clamps the serrated ends of the side members 21 in engagement with an ear 17 of a clamp "B". There is nothing in Brown or Castellon to suggest using a locking element having a channel that is moved slidably between locked and unlocked positions to allow

an auxiliary handle to be quickly and easily attached and detached from a cleaning tool housing. With Brown, especially, detachment of the assembly comprised of components 21 and 22 would seem to be burdensome because the threaded screw extending through the ear 17 would have to be completely removed before components 21 could be separated from the clamp "B". As will be appreciated, with the present system, simply sliding the locking element to its unlocked position allows the main body portion of the clamp-on extension handle to be removed from the tool housing. This is an extremely quick, easy and efficient way to attach, as well as detach, the clamp-on extension handle from the tool housing. In view of these important differences, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under §103 of claim 10 is respectfully requested.

Regarding claim 17, similar amendments have been made to more positively recite the slidable action of the locking element, and the construction of the locking element having a channel. For the reasons presented immediately above, claim 7 is also believed to be allowable.

Minor amendments have been made to claims 19 and 20 to further highlight the structure associated with the auxiliary clamp-on handle. In particular, claim 19 more positively recites that the edge portions of each of the first and second portions of the auxiliary clamp-on handle include a flange. Claim 20 more positively recites that the main body portion includes a neck portion and an elongated handle member insertable into said neck portion. Again, it is believed that dependent claims 17-20 are presently allowable in view of the minor amendments made to the independent claim from which they each depend.

With regard to claim 21, as noted above, a minor amendment has been made to recite a manually slidably movable locking element. Again, for the reasons set forth above, it is believed that claim 21 also clearly defines over the cited references. In claim 23 the dependency has been changed so that this claim depends from claim 21 rather than claim 17.

Regarding independent method claim 24, minor amendments have been made to more positively recite the operation of using a manually, slidable movable locking element to engage edges of the first and second portions of the main body portion and to clamp said first and second portions around the cleaning tool housing. Again, none of the references cited by the Examiner disclose or even remotely suggest the use of a manually, slidable locking element that engages edge portions of a main body of the auxiliary handle assembly. Thus, claim 24 is believed to be in allowable form. A minor amendment has been made to dependent claim 26 to more positively point out the operation of forming said edges of each of the first and second portions with a flange.

In view of the foregoing, it is believed that all of the claims are clearly in form for allowance and such action is respectfully requested. The undersigned also gratefully acknowledges the conditional allowance of claims 11-16, 19, 23 and 26, set forth in paragraph 9 of the April 17, 2006 Office Action. The rewriting of these claims in independent form is being deferred at this time pending the Examiner's review of the amendments made to independent claims 10, 17, 21 and 24.

The undersigned also wishes to express his appreciation to the Examiner for the suggestion set forth by the Examiner in paragraph 10 of the application. The Examiner will note that the term "hingedly" has been added to independent claims 1, 10 and 24. It

is believed that this, taken together with the other amendments made to these claims, clearly place the claims in form for allowance but nevertheless, the Examiner's suggestion is much appreciated.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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